

Walter Ansel Strong

Lexie Huston
Oregon High School, Oregon
Teacher: Sara Werckle

On August 13, 1883, Walter Ansel Strong was born in Chicago. His father, Dr. Albert Strong, was a physician and his mother, Idea Cook. His father died when he was fifteen. The family was left with very little money.

His uncle worked at the *Chicago Daily News* where he was a wealthy editor. Strong used his uncle's wealth to assist him in getting through school and securing his education. He attended an engineering course at Lewis Institute and a law course at John Marshall School of Law. He then took a job at a newspaper in Beloit, Wisconsin, and supported himself through Beloit College. He graduated in 1905 with a Bachelors Degree.

By now, his education was strong, but he had very little money and was still trying to support his mother in Chicago. In 1913, he married Josephine Havalland Webster, a daughter of a wealthy manufacturer in Illinois. The couple later gave birth to five children: Walter Jr., John, Robert, Ann, and David.

Walter moved back to Chicago and started as an audit clerk for his uncle. The *Chicago Daily News* was a very prominent newspaper at the time, and Walter moved his way up to business manager rather quickly and surprisingly. In 1925 the publisher of the paper, Victor Lawson, died. In December of the same year, a group led by Walter purchased the company for 14 million dollars and became an editor and publisher.

When Walter was a young boy, he was very interested in radio broadcasting in addition to journalism. In 1922, when building was done for a new location for the

Chicago Daily News, he “purchased half interest in a local station and became the first newspaper in Chicago, and one of the first in the country, to operate a radio station.

Walter was the chairman of the board of directors for the station.

“Walter was a self made man. All of his success was made on his own, with little to no help from those around him.”

With Walter’s growing family and the summer heat in the city, Walter decided to build a summer retreat. Walter purchased 60 acres along the Rock River from Wallace Heckman, the treasurer of the University of Chicago in 1928. It was two miles south of his wife’s childhood summer home, called “Bee Tree Farm.”

In 1931, Walter went to his home in Winnetka, Illinois, for dinner after golfing with his son John. While in his room, he was struck with a heart attack. By the time the doctor arrived, Walter was dead. He was forty-six. “His death came as a surprise to both his family and friends. He seemed to be in perfect health.” Walter’s ashes were spread on the grounds of his summer castle, among trees that were planted in his memoriam. When his son David was killed in World War II, his ashes were also spread there. The area became known as “The Circle of Pines.”

Walter Strong’s remarkable journalistic career made him one of the most remembered men of his day. He was known for his compassion and love for his family, friends, and employees. His castle still exists today, keeping the legend he left behind very much alive. [From Gary L. Batty, *Honoring the Past. . . Forging the Future: Stronghold Celebrates 40 Years of Ministry*; Keith Call, *Oregon, Illinois*; Ben Duffy, “Walter A. Strong,” *The Youth’s Companion* July 28, 1927; Student Historian’s interview with Jan Hartman, Oct. 8, 2007; Dumas Malone, *Dictionary of American Biography*,

Volume IX; and “Walter Strong, Publisher of the News, Dies,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*
May 11, 1931.]